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SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE VIEWS ON UN THIRD COMMITTEE HUMAN  
RIGHTS PRIORITIES

REF: STATE 95334

¶1. (SBU) Poloffs on September 26 delivered reftel points regarding U.S. priorities for the 2008 UN Third Committee to Director Josephine Reynante of the Office of UN and International Organizations (UNIO) at the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). Director Reynante thanked us for providing U.S. positions and alluded to the Philippines' vocal support for human rights worldwide, but reiterated her government's view that country-specific resolutions are not effective without the cooperation of the country concerned. While acknowledging the dire human rights situation in reftel countries, Director Reynante indicated the GRP prefers consensus solutions.

¶2. (SBU) Responding to our concerns over the concept of "defamation of religion," Reynante lamented the circumstances at UN Human Rights Council meetings in March that in her view doomed consensus on freedom of expression. She opined that, had Canada been willing to table the resolution, a compromise might have been achieved after delegations had time to consult with their capitals. Director Reynante acknowledged that the Philippines has a very low voting coincidence with the U.S. in the UNGA, but she hastened to add that this should not be interpreted as a disengagement from the U.S. and that our countries share a special relationship.

¶3. (SBU) Turning to the subject of prisoners of conscience, Reynante wanted to know if the USG could provide an advance copy of the draft resolution to the GRP. She noted that because there is no universally accepted definition of the term "prisoners of conscience," the GRP has reservations about the resolution's being defined as the primary basis for determining a nation's relations with other countries. She asked whether the USG might be willing to negotiate on the language of the resolution.

KENNEY